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CONTENTS

<i>The American College and Life:</i> PROFESSOR JOSIAH ROYCE	401
<i>American College Education and Life:</i> PROFESSOR JAMES H. TUFTS	407
<i>The Proposed Hawaiian Meeting in 1910</i> ...	414
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i>	415
<i>University and Educational News</i>	418
<i>Discussion and Correspondence:—</i>	
<i>The Mississippi Channel Bottom and Gulf Level:</i> DR. ISIAH BOWMAN and C. F. GRAHAM. <i>The Naming of New Species:</i> DR. HUBERT LYMAN CLARK. <i>The Six-inch Transit Circle of the U. S. Naval Observatory:</i> DR. MILTON UPDEGRAFF	418
<i>Scientific Books:—</i>	
<i>Résultats du voyage du S. Y. Belgica:</i> DR. WM. H. DALL. <i>Reid's Mechanical Drawing:</i> PROFESSOR FREDERICK N. WILLSON ..	421
<i>Scientific Journals and Articles</i>	423
<i>Special Articles:—</i>	
<i>Possible Error in the Estimates of the Rate of Geological Denudation:</i> E. E. FREE	423
<i>The American Society of Zoologists:</i> PROFESSOR LORANDE LOSS WOODRUFF	424
<i>Societies and Academies:—</i>	
<i>The Biological Society of Washington:</i> M. C. MARSH. <i>The Chemical Society of Washington:</i> J. A. LE CLERC. <i>The Anthropological Society of Washington:</i> JOHN R. SWANTON. <i>The Biological and Geological Section of the Academy of Science and Art of Pittsburg:</i> PERCY E. RAYMOND	438

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THE AMERICAN COLLEGE AND LIFE¹

It is in no wise due to my own choice and moving that I am called upon to take part in this discussion. Just because philosophy calls for so much reflection, I consider it a proper part of a philosophical student's business to keep himself relatively naïve, unreflective and directly practical regarding at least some important portion of his own life's business. Upon certain problems it is my duty to reflect, in as critical a fashion as I may. I do reflect about those problems with a good deal of persistence, and I discourse upon those topics at wearisome length. They are topics of logic, of metaphysics and of general ethical doctrine. In the rest of my life I try to stick to business without much reflection. Such naïveté need not mean, I hope, either carelessness or unfaithfulness. It may mean, and in my case I hope that it does mean, so far as that part of my vocation is concerned, practical absorption in tasks. Now part of my vocation is that of a teacher. And while, as I said, I reflect a great deal upon the metaphysical and other topics concerning which I have to teach, I have never been disposed to reflect much about the practical business of teaching itself. I teach as I can. When I observe that I teach ill, I try to mend my ways. I can not tell much about how I try to mend them. I can not formulate a theory of teaching. When I observe that a student

¹ An address given before the Section of Education at the Baltimore meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.